

South Hills Middle School 13508 South 4000 West Riverton, Utah 84065

March 15-16, 2007



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

South Hills Middle School

13508 South 4000 West Riverton, Utah 84065

March 15-16, 2007

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 15-16, 2007, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of South Hills Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Janette Milano is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at South Hills Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at South Hills Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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SOUTH HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Counseling				
Linda Tranter Michael Densley				
Support Staff				
MEDIA CENTER Jeanine Wilson SPEECH PATHOLOGY Karen Chapman SECRETARIES Susan Palmer Janet Sheriff CUSTODIAL STAFF Paul Jolley Dave Doman Ryan Herren Dan Spring Bill Ames	INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANTS Brittani Aguilar Jessica Butterfield Belinda Christensen Michelle Greene Rakel Holmberg Mindy Holt Cynthia Hulet Mary Malmrose Julie Maughan Susan Olson Cheri Prince Louanna Schick Linette Thacker Amy Taylor Gay Taylor Yolanda Tyrrell Tomi Warren	CAFETERIA STAFF Anna Gibson, Mgr. Verlaine Barela Maxine Butterfield Marlynn Chappell Lauri Cluff Laurel Deaver Sheri Garritson Arnetta Hanzel Lori Kay Haworth Angela Kingery Mariana Madsen Paula Masterson Elaine Neff Debra Rueckert Estella Valadez Toby Villescas		

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Lori Muhlestein, Parent
Rebecca Painter, Parent
Julie Rushton, Teacher
Nicole Svee Welch, Administrator

SOUTH HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

South Hills Middle School is committed to improving student achievement and encouraging lifelong learning in a safe, positive, and collaborative environment.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- 1. Students learn best through varied instruction and assessments.
- 2. A student's self-concept impacts learning and behavior.
- 3. Each student:

Takes responsibility.

Is in the proper place.

Goes prepared.

Engages in learning.

Respects self and others at home, at school, and in the community.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. Nancy Jadallah, Eisenhower Junior High School, Granite School District, Visiting Team Co-chair

Betsy Hunt, J.E. Cosgriff Memorial School, Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, Visiting Team Co-chair

Darci Barney, Tooele Junior High School, Tooele School District

Greg Bemis, Hillcrest Junior High School, Murray School District

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Mary Ellen Kettle, Altamont High School, Duchesne School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

SOUTH HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

South Hills Middle School is one of seventeen middle schools in Jordan School District and is located in Riverton, Utah. The school currently has 950 students from the suburban surrounding area. The school population is 94 percent white, four percent Hispanic, and under one percent Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, and American Indian. Special education students comprise 10 percent of the student body, and less than one percent of the school population qualifies as English language learners. South Hills Middle School has 45 certified teachers, a principal, and two assistant principals.

The motto of South Hills Middle School is "Improving Student Achievement." After receiving a grant in 2002, South Hills implemented a middle school philosophy that focused on teaming, collaboration, and positive behavior. The goal was to improve both curriculum and instructional techniques to better meet the academic needs of adolescent students and improve the structure and safety of the overall school environment.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The middle school philosophy adopted in 2002 provided the groundwork for school improvements in collaborative and proactive instruction among the faculty, as well as a positive behavioral support system and high academic expectations for all students. Using the International Center for Leadership in Education's framework of "Rigor, Relevance, Reflection and Relationships," South Hills has worked toward improved test scores, increased attendance, and a decrease in behavioral referrals. It is the belief of South Hills Middle School that all students can learn if given high expectations, clear standards, and a relevant curriculum. Because of these beliefs, there has been a concerted effort to train teachers in reading across the curriculum, writing across the curriculum, and the Six Traits of Writing. Both behavioral and academic standards are posted throughout the school in the form of Tiger Traits and DRSLs posters. Schoolwork is displayed in classrooms and throughout the school. Portfolios used in student-led conferences demonstrate improvement as well as increases in CRT scores. Parents are kept updated through Power School, home notes, and conferences.

South Hills Middle School believes strongly in the "Rigor and Relevance" ideology of William Daggett. As a result, students are coached to work on projects that relate to real life, such as building greenhouses, deciphering the genetic coding of mice, and creating interdisciplinary PowerPoints. Students are also encouraged to perform in the theater, band, and choir. Teachers from curricular areas share ideas and team on lessons. Integrated instruction allows

students to realize the many connections and areas of overlap of subjects and projects.

Teachers meet weekly to focus on student academic and behavioral progress. Teaming allows teachers to get to know their students and share information with other teachers to ensure that students do not "fall through the cracks." Quarterly collaboration cycles based on Schmoker's *Results* allow teachers to participate in quarterly goals, pre- and post-tests, and school-wide celebrations. One of the most beneficial aspects of continuous teaming among the faculty and assessment of students is the ability to design a curriculum that meets the specific needs of students. Changes in the curriculum are data-driven, teaching is always dynamic, and learning on the part of the students is relevant and meaningful.

South Hills Middle School meets or exceeds district averages, and literacy scores are climbing. Stakeholders are encouraged by the level of academic achievement at South Hills, with the school scoring well above 80 percent proficiency in core academic areas. Failing rates are declining. Honor roll rates are increasing, with 50 percent of the students achieving a 3.5 or higher GPA in the first quarter of 2006

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

South Hills Middle School is strongly encouraged to continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze student achievement data to guide the decisions made by the school. The South Hills faculty and administration are encouraged to work as a team to include all students in the regular classroom by differentiating curricula, addressing specific student learning styles, meeting and planning regularly, and monitoring the progress of each special education student on a regular basis.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Continue to research and update technology and books on various subjects and the school library.
- Continue to research best practices and alternative methods of teaching information from the core subjects to special needs students. It is recommended that regular classroom teachers in all subject areas participate in professional development to become familiar with the different learning styles and learning needs of students at South Hills.
- Continue to research best practices when mentoring new teachers in classroom management, core teaching standards, and how to differentiate instruction according to student need.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

To a large extent, the South Hills Middle School community has actively engaged in a collaborative self-study on behalf of students. All members of the staff, both classified and certificated, as well as members of the PTSA, the School Community Council, and students, were included in this process. The school has been a leader in the district in terms of developing and implementing a school-wide collaborative culture, and has a weekly afternoon for staff members to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate on issues of student achievement and performance. The Visiting Team found that the teachers buy into this belief in continuous improvement. The teachers continually meet and discuss data and adapt their instructional strategies and curriculum based on the results of their data.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The Visiting Team found that, to some degree, the school's reflection of its current strengths and limitations was not totally accurate. The school recognized many of its strengths and limitations, but there were places (especially in the focus groups' assessment of the NSSE standards) in which the groups had identified areas as having low implementation, when in fact there was evidence that the number should have been higher. For example, in the section on Quality Instructional Design, the report rated the school as a "2," but the Visiting Team observed teachers using a variety of engaging instructional strategies. Also, in the Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals area, Principle 1 was rated a "3" on collaboration, whereas the Visiting Team observed a high level of collaboration and would have scored the school higher.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

South Hills Middle School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

1. Problem Solving/Critical Thinking

INDICATORS

□ Students engage in relevant and challenging curriculum that promote learning

□ Students reflect on their own learning and work together with their teachers in a collaborative setting in order to improve

2. Effective Communication

INDICATORS

- □ Students use multiple strategies to investigate and solve problems in real-life situations
- □ Students use a variety of methods to gather, develop, evaluate, and communicate ideas

3. Character Values

INDICATORS

□ Students will demonstrate our schools values by following the Tiger Traits:

Takes Responsibility
Is in the Proper Place
Goes Prepared
Engages in Learning
Respects self and others

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

The Visiting Team found that, to a great extent, South Hills Middle School facilitated a collaborative process in which they built a shared vision for the school and a mission that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school. Students and parents, as well as certificated and classified staff members, were involved in the process. The vision, mission, and belief statements were written prior to the school being split into two schools, so the new administration reviewed these statements with the new staff, and all the statements were revised to fit the new staff and student population.

The Visiting Team has noted that, to a large extent, the faculty and staff of South Hills Middle School have clearly defined a set of beliefs that reflect their commitment to supporting student achievement and success. The beliefs are strongly aligned with a deep understanding of the needs of the young adolescent, and with the middle school philosophy.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

To a large extent, the Visiting Team found that the school had defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success. This was apparent when meeting with and discussing these statements with students, staff, and with parents.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

There is clear alignment among the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs. The three documents reflect the school's commitment to the needs of middle school students and what they should learn as they progress through the school community. The indicators for the DRSLs need to be revisited and expanded to indicate what mastery of the DRSL would look like.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

There is strong evidence that the vast majority of teachers and departments align their curricula with Utah State Core Curriculum and with national standards. Collaboration occurs during weekly team meetings in most departments. This collaboration is critical for mentoring new teachers and for ongoing evaluation of subject areas. It is obvious that much informal collaboration occurs among the faculty as members of a new school community. The Math Department is working to set up effective curriculum guidelines and classes to meet the needs of the varied performance levels of incoming students. This includes conversations with surrounding elementary school math departments. The Visiting Team suggests that the staff continue to find time and methods for integrating core concepts across content areas and grade levels. It is also suggested that the faculty fully support inclusion for all students in all subject areas. Moving forward with teaming will support the focus on essential concepts while meeting individual student needs.

The action plan defines literacy and numeracy as two standard areas that all teachers will address. All teachers are expected to incorporate regular vocabulary instruction into all classes. A school-wide "Word of the Week" program is in place, with the expectation that all teachers will incorporate the week's word into their curriculum area. Various departments contribute the weekly word throughout the year. There was little evidence of collaborative work listed specifically by the staff in the report, but from discussion with the department heads, it was evident that collaborative efforts among the departments exist. The English and Social Studies Departments have collaborated on teaching about WWII and the reading the play *Anne Frank*, and about the Civil War with

Soldier's Heart. The CTE departmental classes have worked to collaborate, with the shop classes on building a model home and the home economics classes designing the interiors of the model.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

South Hills Middle School has recently undergone a major change in faculty and administration and a decrease in student population. Because of the addition of new as well as first-year teachers, it is necessary for veteran teachers to mentor new teachers informally and in department meetings. The conversations about student learning are beginning to reflect a focus on the DRSLs. Character education values are reinforced by student rewards and incentives. Effective communication and critical thinking were mentioned by teachers who taught core subjects. The school's focus on literacy and mathematics is emerging, and by clarifying and refining the specific action plan steps connected to the DRSLs, the school can bring about a more coordinated effort to implement the DRSLs across the curriculum

Posters in most classrooms displayed the mission statement and desired results for student learning. The Math Department has a plan to survey the various departments to discover what math skills are needed in their specific curricula, which the Math Department can then support. There is a plan to organize a multi-departmental collaboration project by August 2008.

The 7th and 8th grade teams collaborate on a weekly basis and continue to expand their integrated teaching units.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

The Visiting Team observed to a moderate extent the use of a variety of effective instructional strategies. Most of the teachers were using developmentally appropriate, engaging instructional strategies and activities to help the students learn the material. The teachers are teamed, and collaborate on their integrated instructional as well as their individual lessons. They collaborate and share ideas so that all students are able to enjoy different activities. The Visiting Team observed lecturing and note taking, reading novels, open-ended questioning, popcorn reading, Socratic discussions, visual aids, and some use of technology. The Visiting Team also experienced several co-teaching classes where the resource teacher and aides were in the classroom helping the inclusion students. There were some students off task whom the teachers did not observe or correct.

This was observed in a variety of the classrooms. While many teachers were very effective in their teaching strategies, the Visiting Team recommends that teachers and the administration work on engaging all students in their classrooms and monitoring students to ensure that all students are engaged in learning.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

The Visiting Team observed, to a great extent, a variety of instructional strategies being used. However, most of the classes were doing the same thing—lecturing and taking notes, using PowerPoint presentations, reading, and holding discussions. The classes with inclusion students enrolled had a teacher and aides helping those students fill out the worksheets. We did not see a variety of techniques used in the classes to accommodate the different types of learners.

The Visiting Team recommends that the teachers and staff be trained in best practices and then implement these strategies in their repertoire of teaching skills. The faculty needs to continue using differentiated instruction in all classrooms, using a variety of instruction and techniques in their classrooms to engage all types of learners.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

To a large extent, the leadership provides opportunities to both the staff and students for enrichment and improvement of their teaching and learning. The school offers tutoring before and after school for students who want help with their classes. Teachers also help during their TA class time and during lunch. Teachers also have an open door policy for students who need help.

The school has identified school-wide DRSLs as part of a collaborative process that identified learning expectations in the school environment. The school has not developed rubrics to monitor the progress of these expectations, although teachers frequently discuss the DRSLs with students and include them in their course disclosures in order for students to become familiar with these expectations. The school has relied on traditional assessment systems to monitor student achievement. State Core tests, as well as Milestone tests, are used to monitor student progress; however, it was not made clear whether these results were utilized in evaluating current instructional practices to better serve the student population. The staff members are encouraged to disaggregate and analyze the data from these tests to modify their instruction and/or curriculum as indicated by the data to ensure student achievement. It is the recommendation of the Visiting Team to investigate innovative assessment strategies and instruments to improve student outcomes in the classroom.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The Visiting Team felt that the school, to a moderate degree, had begun to develop school-wide assessments, but that these were in the early stages of development. The Visiting Team did not observe rubrics being used. During discussions with teachers, there was no mention of rubrics. The Visiting Team, as would be expected, did not observe pre-testing or post-testing taking place. However, teachers and administrators discussed the use of pre-tests and post-tests at the beginning and end of each term. Teachers described how pre-tests were used to determine the level of student understanding and adjust teaching methods to meet the students' needs. The Visiting Team observed students preparing for end-of-unit tests and quizzes in some classes. The Visiting Team did not observe specific preparation for state-mandated tests during the visit.

While it is evident that teaching time is valued, the school lacks a clear, comprehensive professional development plan for investing in a school-wide assessment plan. It was uncertain what development process was used by the school to develop assessment methods reflective of purpose and standard. It was evident that some teachers, through the use of grading rubrics, communicate performance standards to students, and that these standards drive the outcomes of learning. The staff is encouraged to collaboratively develop and utilize appropriate assessment tools to tie back into performance standards and intended outcomes.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

The Visiting Team felt that, to a small extent, the assessments of student learning were developed to reflect the intended purpose and/or mastery of the performance standards (with the exception of the yearly CRTs).

The Visiting Team observed teachers using various assessments of student knowledge and understanding. The school action plan identified goals that would use tables, graphs, charts, reading strategies, editing, and school-wide efforts to improve math scores.

The Visiting Team observed school-wide efforts to improve reading literacy during TA to allow students reading time. The Visiting Team questioned teachers and administrators concerning the purpose of TA time. The Visiting Team observed TA in different classes, and observed reading taking place in the latter half of each class. TA time seemed chaotic in some classes. There was no apparent common assessment used to monitor the reading.

The Visiting Team observed examples of student projects in classrooms and display cases. The Visiting Team also observed school-wide citizenship policies in place, as well as student-led presentations, pair/share, Socratic seminars, and teacher-led lectures and presentations. The method of assessment was not clearly visible to the Visiting Team members. Many students were engaged in some classes with question/response. Some students were spontaneous with their questions or answers. However, there was clearly no common assessment being used on a system-wide basis.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

It is evident to the Visiting Team that South Hills Middle School is dedicated to designing and developing assessments that are in the best interests of the students at this school. The departments and teams have discussed various ways to reach this goal. However the Visiting Team did not observe evidence of a defined curriculum (i.e., a curriculum map for each department, which would allow them to correlate their objectives). The lack of school-wide curriculum mapping does not allow cohesiveness across departments in cross-curricular activities. However, the department heads did indicate that several of the individual teachers who were teaming in the 7th, 8th and 9th grade teams had in fact created their own individual curriculum maps. The Visiting Team felt that this would be a next natural step to complete.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The Visiting Team observed that, to a large extent, there was a strong emphasis on instructional practices that focused on increased student achievement. Professional development is planned each year to support student learning and meet the school-wide goals.

A priority for leadership is to promote a positive, safe, and nurturing school environment where teachers teach and students learn. The staff is encouraged to attend professional development and implement best practices in daily instructional delivery.

Teachers and students alike state that learning is important in this school. Students comment that the administration and teachers "care about us and what we will become."

The Visiting Team observed that various forms of professional development have been made available to staff. The staff is working with RESULTS (Schmoker) to increase student accountability and achievement.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The steering committee is involved in making decisions with regard to money allocation, professional development selection, and implementation of school reform.

There is some evidence of using data to make decisions; however, the Visiting Team believes a more thorough disaggregation of data could reveal additional information to better guide decision making on the school level.

It was noted that during team meetings, teachers use student classroom data to arrive at decisions regarding curriculum selection, instructional delivery techniques, re-teaching strategies, and after-school tutoring.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

Teachers meet weekly to reflect on teaching practices and teaching of core content, and to review student performance. The lead teacher submits to the administration the agenda for each meeting, and an administrator attends these meetings. Student instructional and behavioral goals are developed, implemented, and evaluated during this time period.

Administration monitors student behavior to assure compliance to school policy and procedures.

The Visiting Team noted many instances of student off-task behavior and class instructional time not being used efficiently. There is an effort to make hall sweeps to ensure that students are in classrooms and are learning; however, it was noted that many students are in the hallways during class instructional time.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The Visiting Team observed that, to a moderate degree, there is a school-wide effort to obtain needed funding to promote school-wide goals. The administration and teachers have sought and obtained grants that further this effort.

The school administration is involved in team meetings where teachers are able to discuss their needs for school monies and resources. The steering committee meets to discuss school organization and to give input on needed changes.

The administration and teachers work cooperatively to ensure a safe school. Teachers are routinely in the halls during breaks to monitor student behavior.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

A strength of the school is the alignment of resources with the school improvement effort. The steering committee meets with the administration to give input on allocation of resources. Teachers believe their budgetary needs are addressed, and needed items are purchased by the administration.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

Teacher Early Day is protected and used for team meetings that mentor teacher instructional delivery, discuss the Core Curriculum, and seek solutions for student intervention.

The administration, staff, and parents voice concerns about the high turnover of staff members and hiring of many first-year teachers. The average number of years of teaching experience among staff members is less than four, and the administration recognizes the need to mentor new teachers so they will continue employment at this school.

Students and teachers alike state that they feel the support of the school leadership and can rely on their help and support should the need arise.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

The Visiting Team, to a large extent, saw evidence of community building being fostered by South Hills Middle School's staff, parents, and administration. The school creates and sustains a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. School activities such as band, drama, and student council create a sense of belonging among students. The Visiting Team noted the enthusiasm and energy among faculty and staff members for building positive relationships to enhance school improvement. It was also noted that there is a

strong desire among the school's faculty, students, parents, and administration to create opportunities for collaborative and interdependent teams to work toward and achieve the desired goals of the school.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

To a moderate extent, there is evidence that the school engages parents and families as partners in the learning process. Communication between the students' homes and the school is regular, two-way, and meaningful. Power School updates occur once a week, and teachers e-mail parents on a regular basis. A PTSA newsletter is published quarterly, with a principal's note included as needed. Parents also support the school by volunteering in several capacities during the school day. Pre-registration visits from elementary schools occur every spring. South Hills Middle School extends the school building for community meetings in an effort to support the surrounding community. There is willingness on the part of staff members and administrators to collaborate; Wednesday planning time has been set aside for this to occur on a formal basis. This time allows teachers the opportunity to extend and overlap a subject in different core areas through collaborative efforts with fellow faculty members.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The Visiting Team has observed the faculty and staff of South Hills Middle School building skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development to a very great extent. The Visiting Team also observed that the South Hills Middle School faculty and staff have shown a strong commitment to professional development and a high degree of willingness to learn new ideas and techniques. South Hills Middle School was the first school in Jordan School District to pilot early release for collaboration time, and is currently one of four middle schools out of seventeen in the district participating in the early release program. Teams meet weekly to address the needs of their students and to share what they have learned from various professional development opportunities. Most professional development occurs after the school day, and many are mandated for the staff to attend. Staff members are also encouraged to attend other forms of professional development and log their attendance with the administration. The Math Department is also strongly encouraged to participate in Jordan School District's Math IMPACT Program. Furthermore, the South Hills Middle School administration is fully supportive of professional opportunities for the staff, and strives to find ways to meet the needs of the staff.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

To a very large extent, the culture of collaboration and continuous improvement appears to be deeply ingrained in the staff at South Jordan Middle School. They are fully committed to weekly team meetings and to using that time in an efficient manner to fully discuss team issues, centered mostly on students and their well being. The staff shows a high level of willingness to attend greatly diverse professional development meetings, workshops, and in-services. The staff is also very supportive of the newer staff members, as well as the senior staff members and the various needs for professional development of both groups. The school community also appears to be supportive of the school and its culture of collaboration and change.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high /middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The Visiting Team found that there were major deficiencies in the action plan. There was no alignment between the action plan and the recommendations for improvement from individual departments and focus groups. Additionally, there was limited alignment between the school improvement plan and the action plan.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The Visiting Team found that the teachers, to a large extent, are committed to their school and to their students. The teachers are aware of their limitations and have suggestions for improvement based on their data. However, the action plan was incomplete and needs to incorporate all of the areas identified by the focus groups and the individual departments.

e) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishment of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

The Visiting Team found that, to a limited extent, the school has made plans for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plan. The action plan does not include all of the recommendations set forth by the focus groups and the individual departments. The action plan would need to include all of these recommendations and then provide a timeline and a means of assessment for each of the recommendations

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the school and its staff on the collaborative and supportive culture of the school.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on its strong mentoring practices for new teachers.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on the positive school climate and atmosphere among students and staff and administration.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff members on their commitment to academic rigor and relevance, especially for their 9th graders.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on its inclusionary model of instruction and the support of the administration for this effort.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on its degree of parental involvement in the school, as well as the accreditation process.
- The Visiting Team commends the support staff for its excellent attitudes and for the exemplary condition of the school.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff and administration for their willingness to collaborate, team, and provide support for each other in the rebuilding of the school, and for their commitment to and focus on student learning and character building.

• The Visiting Team commends the administration for its commitment to supporting the staff in the areas of resource allocation, professional development, and leadership.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue vertical articulation with the high school, but also include the elementary feeder schools to provide a seamless transition between levels on curricular concerns.
- The Visiting Team recommends that teachers continue professional development to acquire skills for meeting the needs of diverse learners. All teachers are encouraged to use a variety of developmentally appropriate instructional strategies and assessments to engage students with all learning styles.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school entertain the idea of curriculum mapping of all courses so that cross-curricular integration of content is possible and encouraged.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the ratio of students to counselors be revisited and reduced.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration and staff continue to address the issues of truancy, tardiness, and off-task behaviors.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to mentor new teachers while improving and expanding on the school's mentoring practices.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit the data and disaggregate it to the level of the child, such that the students who are not successful are identified along with their areas of weakness.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit the recommendations of the focus groups and the departments and include these in the action plan. The school should then align the school improvement plan with the action plan and the strategies for implementing the DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit the DRSL rubric and define all levels of performance indicators.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit the action plan and align it with the recommendations set forth in the document, so that the school's improvement plan is one inclusive document.